



# PERSPECTIVES

A publication for parents and professionals serving individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders

## Here are some Tips for Autism Awareness Month

April is the month for Autism Awareness and it got me thinking. I thought about what we could do to create more awareness and understanding during this month and came up with something I think would be a great different approach.

Let's start off and continue the month by communicating. I believe the best way we can understand autism as well as understanding the so called "normal" world is by opening our minds and having honest communication. Some people may be doing this already, but it doesn't hurt to continue or strive for more. Posted by [alex](#).

Reprinted from [www.aspiesforfreedom.com](http://www.aspiesforfreedom.com)

## April is Autism Awareness Month

Let's follow Alex's suggestion. As we understand the normal world, we can open our minds, communicate and try to understand the "autism spectrum" world.

## Autism Walk

The ASGGC has locked in its date for the 2009 Awareness Walk. May 30 is the big day! For further information, contact Cheryl at 810-694-8034 or Valerie at 810-659-7004.

## "Autism: An Integrated View"

Research on autism has flourished in the last 20 years; as a result of this growth, the research has become more specialized within the neurocognitive, clinical and interventionist fields. In an effort to show an integrated view of these specialties, a new

collection of research on autism spectrum disorders investigates a range of current thinking - from functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging studies to naturalistic intervention.

*Autism: An Integrated View* features contributions from scientific teams at the forefront of contemporary research on autism. These experts have concluded that an interdisciplinary approach is not only necessary to the understanding of this complex developmental disorder, but is also an essential link in defining key issues found in other disciplines. The text includes helpful cross reference sections to connect chapter topics; its introductory and concluding chapters highlight major research themes while exploring broader issues on the integration of autism research. This comprehensive overview balances a wide scope of perspectives for scholars, practitioners, and students alike.

Reprinted from [www.autism-society.org](http://www.autism-society.org)

## Temple Grandin Movie



Autistic [Dr. Temple Grandin](#), a designer of livestock handling facilities and a Professor of Animal Science at Colorado State University, is an icon in the Autistic Community. Her life has been a beacon and an inspirational story and after a long negotiation is getting her biography brought to HBO. [Claire Danes](#) is in negotiations to star as Grandin in the film which is currently moving forward after nine years.

"I made a commitment to Temple that I was going to make it and make it right," said Emily Gerson

### Inside this issue:

Famous People with AS	2
Another View	4
Local Autism Groups	6
Funny Moments and Autism	6
Conferences	7

Saines, one of the executive producers, who has a son with autism. "I never pushed to get it made until now, because now we got it right."

Reprinted from [www.aspiesforfreedom.com](http://www.aspiesforfreedom.com)

## Parallel Play

### A lifetime of restless isolation explained.

By Tim Page

My second-grade teacher never liked me much, and one assignment I turned in annoyed her so extravagantly that the red pencil with which she scrawled "See me!" broke through the lined paper. Our class had been asked to write about a recent field trip, and, as was so often the case in those days, I had noticed the wrong things:

Well, we went to Boston, Massachusetts through the town of Warrentville, Connecticut on Route 44A. It was very pretty and there was a church that reminded me of pictures of Russia from our book that is published by Time-Life. We arrived in Boston at 9:17. At 11 we went on a big tour of Boston on Gray Line 43, made by the Superior Bus Company like School Bus Six, which goes down Hunting Lodge Road where Maria lives and then on to Separatist Road and then to South Eagleville before it comes to our school. We saw lots of good things like the Boston Massacre site. The tour ended at 1:05. Before I knew it we were going home. We went through Warrentville again but it was too dark to see much. A few days later it was Easter. We got a cuckoo clock.

It is an unconventional but hardly unobservant report. In truth, I didn't care one bit about Boston on that spring day in 1963. Instead, I wanted to learn about Warrentville, a village a few miles northeast of the town of Mansfield, Connecticut, where we were then living. I had memorized the map of Mansfield, and knew all the school-bus routes by heart—a litany I would sing out to anybody I could corner. But Warrentville was in the town of Ashford, for which I had no guide, and I remember the blissful sense of resolution I felt when I certified that Route 44A crossed Route 89 in the town center, for I had long hypothesized that they might meet there. Of such joys and pains was



my childhood composed.

I hope that young Aspies, informed by recent literature on the subject, will find the world somewhat less challenging than I have. By now, I am fairly used to myself, and my symptoms bloom publicly only on rare occasions. Waiting for the check after a Washington lunch in 2005, I realized that it was both the hundred and fortieth anniversary of Lincoln's assassination and exactly forty years since the murderers of the Clutter family ("In Cold Blood") were put to death in Kansas. I doubt that my companion was equally thrilled by this coincidence, especially when elaborated upon in such sudden, bursting detail in the middle of a lovely spring day, but at least I controlled the temptation to launch into a lengthy exculpation of Mrs. Surratt. I count that as progress.

Reprinted from [www.newyorker.com](http://www.newyorker.com)

## Who are Famous People with Aspergers Syndrome

This article takes a closer look at well-known figures that have either been diagnosed with or suspected of having Aspergers. Also it provides some useful insights into the types of work, which may be suitable for people with Aspergers syndrome.

It is generally agreed that many adults with Aspergers are able to work successfully in mainstream jobs and live independent lives.

It is also recognised that individuals with Aspergers may make great intellectual contributions.

Reports suggest an association with accomplishments in

### PERSPECTIVES

A publication of GISD's Special Education Services Center

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art, music, engineering, computer science, mathematics, and physics. The deficits associated with Aspergers may be debilitating, but many individuals experience positive achievements, particularly those who are able to excel in areas less dependent on social interaction, such as mathematics, music and the sciences.

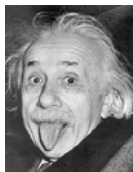
It is sometimes suggested that, Aspergers may be an important factor in many valuable contributions to fields and areas that benefit most from the type of thinking and attention to detail that only individuals with Aspergers can provide.

Aspergers is sometimes viewed as a syndrome with both benefits and drawbacks, and many notable adults with Aspergers or autism have achieved success in their fields. There are many very famous, very successful people who either had, or are believed to have had, Aspergers Syndrome.



Bill Gates, the Microsoft computer billionaire is supposed to have AS. Some other prominent AS-diagnosed individuals include Nobel Prize-winning economist Vernon Smith, electro pop rocker Gary Numan, and Satoshi Tajiri, the creator of the Pokémon franchise.

Colorado State University professor and author Temple Grandin was diagnosed with autism at a young age, and has used her autism to her advantage in her profession as an animal behaviourist specializing in livestock handling.



Some AS researchers speculate that well-known figures, including Thomas Jefferson, Jeremy Bentham, Albert Einstein, Isaac Newton, Glenn Gould and Ludwig Wittgenstein had AS because they showed some AS-related tendencies or behaviours, such as intense interest in one subject, and/or social problems.

These unconfirmed diagnoses, especially posthumous ones, remain controversial, as they work only from biographical information and sometimes ignore documented evidence that would indicate against Aspergers syndrome. Nevertheless it could be argued that it would be a loss to society if Aspergers were cured, as many of

these individuals clearly make a significant contribution to society and their skills are highly prized in many specialist fields.

There are several groups on the internet designed by people with Aspergers specifically for them such as [www.aspiesforfreedom.com](http://www.aspiesforfreedom.com). These sites provide a wealth of support and advice on many issues including work and jobs.

It is important for people with Aspergers syndrome to have somewhere where they can talk to similar people and share their experiences.

This short article is written to show how people with Aspergers syndrome truly have a unique gift and an opportunity to apply their special abilities to make a real contribution to the future, with examples drawn from both the present and further back in time. It also provides an insight into the types of work and jobs that might make the best use of their skills and talents.

About the author:

Dave Angel is a social worker with families who have children on the Autistic Spectrum and is the author of a new e-book that answers the 46 most asked questions by parents of children with Asperger's. To claim your free 7 day Mini-Course for parents of children with Asperger's Syndrome visit: [www.parentingaspergers.com](http://www.parentingaspergers.com) today.

Reprinted from [www.disabledinfo.co.uk](http://www.disabledinfo.co.uk)

## **SUN News—An Update for The Gray Center Social Understanding Network!**

There's an old saying, "No one is perfect...that's why pencils have erasers." Some of us find comfort in this thought. It takes the pressure off, and allows us to simply do our best, and to be okay with the results.

Others find that thought discomfoting. They have difficulty accepting that they are less than perfect. They wear down the erasers on their pencils, or rub right through the paper when erasing, in their attempts to complete an assignment without any

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

flaws. Individuals with "Type A" personalities, those who were the firstborn in their families, and occasionally those with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) are among those who sometimes struggle with the difficulties associated with perfectionism. Wilt Chamberlain pointed out one discrepancy between the messages adults send about being perfect: "They say that nobody is perfect. Then they tell you practice makes perfect. I wish they'd make up their minds."

While it's important to teach others how to handle a tendency toward perfectionism, the above quote also indicates the importance of evaluating our response to others. Do we find ways to encourage them? Do we point out where they excel, and not just the areas where they could use some improvement? Are we expecting them to be perfect, even while we know they will not achieve perfection? "When nobody around you seems to measure up, it's time to check your yardstick." (Bill Lemley)



One of the resources sold at The Gray Center is the book, "What to do When Good Enough Isn't Good Enough," by Thomas Greenspon. The publisher's description of the book reads as follows:

"Perfectionism may seem like a worthy goal, but it's actually a burden. When you believe you must be perfect, you live in constant fear of making mistakes. Most children don't know what perfectionism is, yet many suffer from it. Nothing they do is ever good enough. School assignments are hard to start or hand in. Relationships are challenging, and self-esteem is low. Written to and for ages 9-13, this book helps kids understand how perfectionism hurts them and how to free themselves. Includes true-to-life vignettes, exercises, and a note to grown-ups."

Reprinted from [www.thegraycenter.org](http://www.thegraycenter.org)

## Another View

with Linda Hodgdon

There is a story I hear over and over. It has to do with using visual supports with older students and

adults.

The script goes something like this: He doesn't need them anymore. He understands just fine. We don't need to use them. Visuals are not appropriate for teenagers (or adults). They look too babyish for them. Using those pictures makes this person appear "different" from everyone else.

In the next sentence I begin to hear details about the individual. He won't cooperate. He has meltdowns or temper tantrums or won't do what we want him to do. Or maybe he asks the same questions over and over. Or perseverates on certain topics. Or gets upset when the routine changes. He is nervous & anxious. And on...and on...



The bottom line is that people don't seem to be reporting a happy, contented individual who masters life with confidence.

And the other bottom line is that the person reporting doesn't see any connection between their attitude about visual supports and the individual's behavior.

### Here's an example

I received some correspondence from a Mom recently. She shared a frustration that I have heard from many others. Here's the story.

*My son is now in an adult day program. I have been really struggling with them as I insist that Tom needs visuals to give him information, not only for his day or week (so he knows what the heck is going on!) but a monthly calendar as well. He needs that because he worries about when he will get to do things that are coming months from now.*

The staff and directors of the adult program do not understand the importance of these visuals and use them inconsistently.

For example, one of the things that makes my son frantic is not knowing where they will be going out to eat. They go out to eat twice monthly and they typically decide where to go the day before, or the day of.

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

My son LOVES to go out to eat and of course he has favorite foods (McDonalds & pizza). Unfortunately, he never knows when they might be going to either of those places.



This is what happens. On the day they finally go out for pizza, he comes home and loudly, and repeatedly "asks," "I want to go have pizza with Tony!!" (his staff person). Of course I have no idea when he will get to go again. I can only show him that they will be going out to eat in two more weeks.

Because it may be a month or more before they get to go out for pizza again it causes him untold amounts of anxiety and he will obsess about going out for pizza.



### The solution is so simple

Mom has described the situation so well. And the solution would be so simple. A calendar that gives the information would be an easy fix for this problem. And it would be a great activity to do WITH Tom. I think he would enjoy creating that calendar.

### And the question is WHY?

Why do the adults in charge resist something so simple? Is it because they are uninformed about the value of those visual supports?

Mom gave part of the answer in her letter. She said they use visual supports inconsistently. That is sad. It's sad for Tom. But it's also sad for the staff. Inconsistent use means they place no real value on those visual tools.

If Tom is obsessing about pizza at home, I have a strong hunch he is obsessing about it at his day program too. And it is driving someone there crazy. Do they understand how those visual tools can help change Tom's behavior?

### Not by age but by need

We need to determine the use of visual supports by NEED, not by age. In this situation, the purpose for using the visual tools (calendar or schedule) is to give information.

Individuals don't outgrow their need for information. Other "values" that come from using the visual tools are reassurance, confirmation, aiding memory, peace of mind, reducing anxiety... and the list goes on.



When we give people information in a form that they can understand (and go back to for reassurance) it changes their behavior.

### Even if you don't know the answer

Someone may say they don't know what is happening in two weeks so they can't give the information. Well, even then, it's possible to give information.

For example, put something on the calendar to indicate going out to lunch. Then put a question mark on the calendar to show that we are not sure where we are going. Even that is better than nothing.

(Note: People who like to make last minute decisions may not realize how much anxiety they create for individuals who have a desire and need to know more information. Perhaps a change in the "system" would make life less stressful for everyone.)

### And a few more points

1. Many of these adults came from programs where visual strategies were used for communication. If they did, continuing their use in a "no brainer."
2. If these individuals never used visual strategies before, it's not a problem. Start now. It is never too late to introduce visual supports. You just have to remember that you are teaching something new. That means you have to TEACH what the visual tools mean.
3. Using visual tools for adults is not different from using them for young children. You need to think about the PURPOSE of the visual supports: giving information, giving choices, teaching the steps of a task, scheduling the day, etc.
4. Visual tools for adults should not look babyish. That does not mean they need to be complicated or hard to understand. For

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

example, photos can work for any age. (Think about the photo albums and day planners and calendars that adults use. They accomplish the purpose without looking "babyish.")

- 5. Inconsistent is almost worse than never. The VALUE of the visual supports does not become established in the environment for staff or clients.

### The bottom line

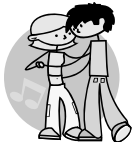
I hope the staff at that day program learn to use visual supports effectively in their environment. The individuals they work with would be much more content and cooperative. And it would make their job SOOOOOO much easier.

P.S. Do YOU ever look at your own calendar or day planner to help you remember what is happening in YOUR life? Do you ever go back to look again - more than once?

Reprinted from [www.LindaHodgdon.com](http://www.LindaHodgdon.com)

## Local Autism Groups

**Bill Nason Education Series** on the Autism Spectrum at Atherton High School. Contact Pat Spohn at 810-694-0244.



**Asperger Teen Nights** (3rd Friday of each month). Contact Amy Daleo at 810-655-5752.

**Cub Scouting** for Boys with Autism. Contact Frank Mitchell at 810-394-1293.

**OUCARES** offers music, social skills, basketball, soccer, Animals in Art, Cartooning I & II, and an after hours adult social. Go to [www.oakland.edu/oucares](http://www.oakland.edu/oucares). E-mail: [oucares@oakland.edu](mailto:oucares@oakland.edu)  
Phone: 248-370-2424



**Judson Center Trainings:**

- Babysitting Training
- Professional Lecture Series
- Biomedical Support Group
- Nick Dubin: A Five Week Course in Asperger's and Personality

For more information go to [www.judsoncenter.org](http://www.judsoncenter.org) or call 248-549-4339.

**Mott Children's Health Center** offers free:

- Yoga: call 810-237-8692
- Parent Empowerment Program. Call Karen Shoemaker at 767-5750, ext. 5292
- Teen Social (12-16) call 237-8692

**ASM Annual 5k Walk/Run!** May 9, 2009 at Hawk Island Park in Lansing. Register online at [www.autism-mi.org](http://www.autism-mi.org)



**Resource Fair:** Spring Spectrum Expo, 2009

Saturday, May 16, 2009

10:00-3:00

Oakland Schools Administration Building

2111 Pontiac Lake Rd

Waterford, Michigan 48238

Special Guests: Nick Dubin and Linda Hodgdon

## Funny Moments and Autism

These are REAL moments that people have experienced with special people in their life who are on the autism spectrum.

### Gift Mug

I work as a middle school special ed teacher with students on the spectrum. After Spring Break, one of my students with Asperger's presented me with a small box. I opened it and there was a coffee mug inside. Imagine my surprise when I pulled it out and saw that he had drawn a picture of an apple on it and even written a personal inscription, "2nd best teacher." I use it with pride and show it off at every opportunity.



### Home Depot in for a surprise!

My class took a trip to Home Depot to practice locating items in a store. We walked through the bathroom department on our way to the garden department and I heard the Speech Therapist calling me frantically. When I turned I saw one of my students backing up to a display toilet with his pants down. I quickly pulled his pants up and moved right along to the garden department.



(Continued on page 7)

## Conferences

Date	Title & Location	Speakers	Fee	Contact Info
	ASM Spring Focus Workshops begin in March		Varies	www.autism-mi.org 517-882-2800
Mar. 17, 2009	AS & Adolescence	Teresa Bolick Talmer Shockley	\$75	www.thegrayscale.org 616-954-9749
Mar. 18, 2009	Sensory Integration Processing Grand Rapids	Susan Larson Kidd, Ed.D., Ed.S.	\$179	800-839-4584 www.health-ed.com
Mar. 18, 2009	Sensory Processing Disorder Saginaw	Chailene Young ORT/L, CEAS	Varies	summit-education.com
Mar. 19, 2009	Sensory Integration Processing Lansing	Susan Larson Kidd, Ed.D., Ed.S.	\$179	800-839-4584 www.health-ed.com
Mar. 19, 2009	Sensory Processing Disorder Flint	Chailene Young ORT/L, CEAS	Varies	summit-education.com
Mar. 20, 2009	Sensory Integration Processing Ann Arbor	Susan Larson Kidd, Ed.D., Ed.S.	\$179	800-839-4584 www.health-ed.com
Mar. 20, 2009	Sensory Processing Disorder Detroit	Chailene Young ORT/L, CEAS	Varies	summit-education.com
Mar. 23, 2009	Sensory Processing Disorder Kalamazoo	Chailene Young ORT/L, CEAS	Varies	summit-education.com
Mar. 24, 2009	Sensory Processing Disorder Lansing	Chailene Young ORT/L, CEAS	Varies	summit-education.com
Mar. 25, 2009	Sensory Processing Disorder Ann Arbor	Chailene Young ORT/L, CEAS	Varies	summit-education.com
Mar. 27, 2009	Asperger Syndrome & Adolescence: Building Skills for the Real World Grand Rapids	Talmer Shockley Teresa Bolick	\$75	www.thegrayscale.org
Mar. 30-31, 2009	Sensory Processing Disorder Clinton County RESA	Dr. Lucy Jane Miller	\$295	989-224-6831 www.ccreesa.org
Apr. 4, 2009	Dr. Sally Burton-Hoyle Mott Children's Health Center 4:00-6:00	Free to Genesee County residents		237-8691
May 12, 2009	Aggression, Rage & Meltdowns! Strategies for Managing Students with Behavioral, Emotional & Spectrum Disorders Southgate	Kay Otten	\$199	800-678-8908 www.sdresources.org
Nov. 5-6, 2009	PECS Detroit		\$395	www.pecs.com Not available yet

(Continued from page 6)

### **Comfort**

My 7 year old doesn't talk but every time I'm sad about something, he comes up to me and rubs his head back and forth on my arm. That's exactly what our dog does. I know he's trying to comfort me and it means the world to me.



### **Let's eat**

We were with family when my son was hungry and clearly very impatient to eat. His Grandpa said, "Jaden, keep your pants on"! Jaden didn't say anything, but gave his Grandpa a quizzical look and checked to make sure that everything was zipped and buttoned properly!

Reprinted from [www.nlconcepts.com](http://www.nlconcepts.com)

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Special Education Services Center  
2413 West Maple Avenue  
Flint, Michigan 48507-3493  
Phone: 810-591-4877  
Fax: 810-591-4548



## Support Groups

- × Autism Support Group of Genesee County:  
[www.geneseeaautism.org](http://www.geneseeaautism.org)
- × ASA/Oakland County Chapter Events:  
[www.asaoakland.org](http://www.asaoakland.org)
- × [www.oucares.edu](http://www.oucares.edu) (click site map, then centers)
- × Mott Children's Health Center Parent Empowerment Program for parents and caregivers of newly diagnosed or suspected ASD. Karen Shoemaker 767-5750, ext. 5292
- × Kathleen's House: [www.kathleenshouse.org](http://www.kathleenshouse.org), 810-720-0667.

## Websites

- 🔗 Autism Society of America: [www.autism-society.org](http://www.autism-society.org)
- 🔗 Autism Society of Michigan: [www.autism-mi.org](http://www.autism-mi.org)
- 🔗 ASA Oakland County Chapter:  
[www.asaoakland.org](http://www.asaoakland.org)
- 🔗 Dr. Tony Attwood: [www.tonyattwood.com](http://www.tonyattwood.com)
- 🔗 On-line Asperger's Information and Support-OASIS: [www.aspergersyndrome.org](http://www.aspergersyndrome.org)
- 🔗 The Gray Center: [www.TheGrayCenter.org](http://www.TheGrayCenter.org)
- 🔗 Liane Holliday-Willey: [www.ASPIE.com](http://www.ASPIE.com)
- 🔗 Free pictures of visual schedules, etc.:  
[www.usevisualstrategies.com](http://www.usevisualstrategies.com)
- 🔗 Picture Exchange Communication System:  
[www.pecs.com](http://www.pecs.com)
- 🔗 TEACCH: [www.teacch.com](http://www.teacch.com)